

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

Media Office

Democratic Caucus

John Schorg, Director

Statehouse, Room 157

Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

1-800-382-9842 or 1-317-232-9621

Fax Number: 1-317-232-9792

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 8, 2005

OXLEY: WASHINGTON COUNTY RIVERBOAT MONEY AT RISK

INDIANAPOLIS – State Rep. Dennie Oxley (D-English) said today that Washington County stands at risk of losing around \$400,000 in riverboat revenues if a plan advocated by Indiana Senate Republicans and endorsed by Gov. Mitch Daniels is allowed to become law.

"Riverboat money that Washington County has used to improve roads and help our local schools could be taken away by the Senate Republicans in their efforts to balance the state budget," Oxley said today.

"The governor has told me that he will not stand in the way of this plan to loot Washington County of funding they were promised by the Legislature, so area residents need to register their concerns as strongly as possible to their elected officials," he continued. "I know that I have heard from many local people who cannot believe that the state budget is being financed on their backs."

To date, Senate Republicans have resisted opposition from members of their own caucus and Senate Democrats to remove the provision from legislation that sets up funding options for the state budget. The plan is contained in House Bill 1120, while the budget is in House Bill 1001.

"When I first heard of this plan to take riverboat money away from places like Washington County, I met with Gov. Mitch Daniels to ask that he stop the Senate Republicans from pursuing this effort," Oxley said. "While he said that he was sympathetic to our request, the governor also made it clear that one of his top priorities was balancing the budget, and if riverboat money was needed to achieve that goal, then he would not stand in the way of the Senate Republicans pursuing that plan."

Oxley said there would be a devastating impact if the Senate Republicans and the governor are able to take Washington County's riverboat money away.

"With the local share of the riverboat money, we have been able to pursue projects that would not have been completed because other avenues of local funding did not exist," Oxley said. "If we do not have that source of revenue on hand, officials will have to look at other means to get funding, such as raising property taxes."

"Considering that the state budget proposals that are now before the Legislature will force property tax increases on local units of government, these are burdens the people of Washington County do not need," he added. "It would be disappointing to see the Legislature go back on its promise to those counties that benefit from riverboats, and take the local revenue away."

"In the House, Republicans and Democrats were able to work together to defeat one plan to take the riverboat money away, and I hope we can work together to stop this Senate Republican proposal in these last weeks before the close of the 2005 legislative session," Oxley concluded.

---30---

This news release can be accessed on the Internet at www.IN.gov/H73